

Today's Lesson...

Hand Gestures Around the World

*A presentation on cultural parallels and differences that
yield both understanding and misinterpretation*

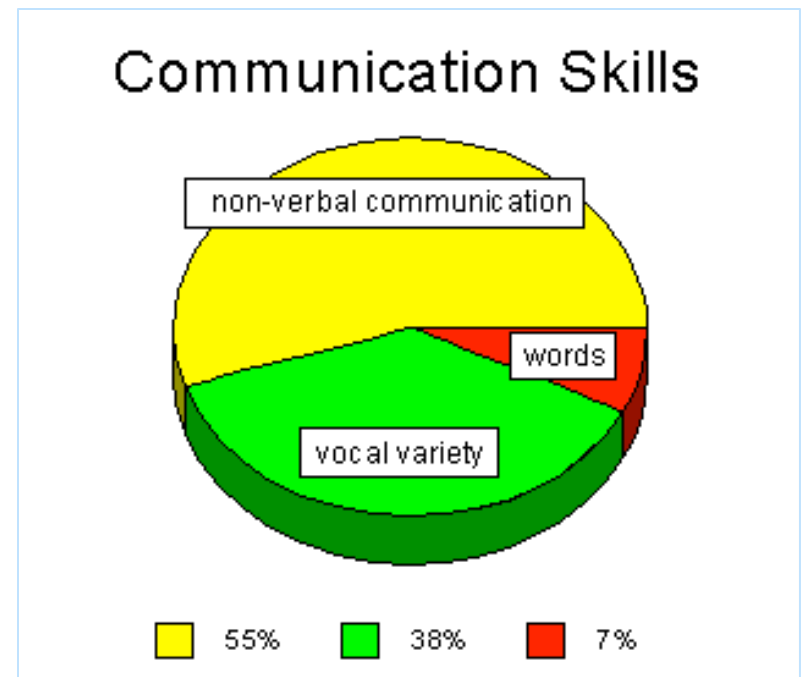
Introduction to Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is universal in contrast to spoken language.

Between official and unofficial spoken languages, there are over 5,000 dialects around the world, which leaves a lot of room for misreading.

Experts believe that between 65% - 93% of communication is non-verbal. Body language is rarely misinterpreted.

This includes physical contact and body language, which can be both **intentional** and **unintentional**.



Introduction (continued)

Although natural body language is almost universal amongst cultures, **hand gestures**, despite their ease of apprehension overall, vary in meaning depending on the country.

Gestures of the same appearance exist across many cultures, however the connotation and consequence surrounding them vary.

Due to these cultural inconsistencies, having cultural knowledge of appropriate gestures is a necessity to anyone crossing a geographic line.



Similar Signs, Different Meanings

*A look into hand gestures and their
meanings for different cultures*





Consequential Misunderstandings

Scenario One:

You're vacationing in Greece and playing a soccer with a few locals. After your teammate scores a goal, you give your him a thumbs-up to congratulate him.

What did you say to him?

You unintentionally said, "Up yours."

Scenario Two

You're dining in Germany when a waiter asks how your dish is. You're chewing and don't want to be rude, so you give him the "A-Okay" sign.

Why does he storm away in anger?

Because you really just called him an "A**hole."

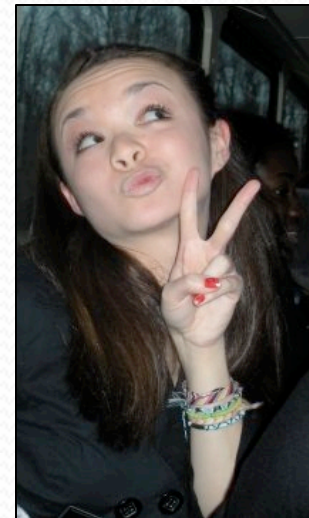
America

Cultural Gestures

- Beckoning Finger
 - Beckoning sign, “come here”

- A-OK Sign
 - Sign of approval or praise

- “V” Sign
 - With palm out it means “peace”; with palm in it stood for victory, especially around WWII era



America

Cultural Gestures (cont.)

- Thumbs-Up
 - Sign of approval
- Middle Finger
 - General insult, “up yours”



United States vs. France

Similar gestures take on different meanings

In France, the middle finger takes on the same meaning as it does in the United States. However, the A-OK sign here is also used as an insult meaning “you’re a zero” or “a**hole”. This is a perfect example of why tourists should be careful about using hand gestures while traveling abroad.



Three Gestures That Require Cautious Use

Thumbs-Up

Germany – “Number one”

China – Excellent

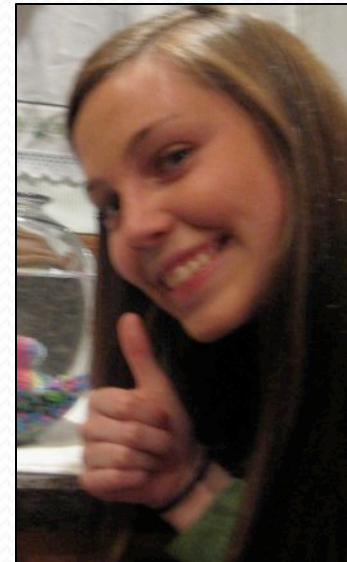
Japan – Boss or husband

America – Sign of approval

Australia- Sign of approval

Greece – “Up yours”

Middle East – Obscene
gesture



Three Gestures That Require Cautious Use



A-OK Sign

America, England – “A-OK”

Japan, China – Money

France – “You’re a zero”

Germany – “A**hole” or
“Homosexual

Greece, Spain- Vulgar

Three Gestures That Require Cautious Use

“V” Sign

America – Peace; Victory

England, Nigeria – Vulgar
expression signifying
female genitalia

Australia, Italy, Ireland –
Insult



Wrap-Up

- Gestures are rarely universal across cultures
- Make Sure you familiarize yourself with cross-culture gestures if you want to avoid misunderstanding
- Don't be culturally ignorant!!!
- Some gestures, however, are almost universal- so use common sense!

Language

Pittsburghese

Yinz speak it en'at?





Pittsburghese Quiz

<http://www.pittsburghese.com/quiz.shtml>

Listen & Translate!

Symbols to communicate Abstract thought

- allows for expression of time and building of knowledge base
- we can determine hundreds of cultural facts about a person from voice/language (race, gender, class, wealth)
- can we have culture w/out language?

Language directs perception, viewpoint, even culture-

- it “colors” your view of the world (ex.life=competition)
- many derogatory words for minorities, few for majority
- you look for evidence to support that view

-Sapir-Whorf Thesis:

words are constructed to show importance in a culture
by constructing these words, importance is attached,
which is learned by future generation

Ex. in America: money, sex, attractiveness

Is language strictly a human construct?

- is language what sets apart humans from other animals?
- can animals have abstract thought?
- if so, can we learn to communicate across species?

